

Finding of No Significant Impact
Skinny Dipper Hot Springs Unauthorized Use
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2013-0025-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2013-0025-EA would not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA, using the following factors defining significance:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The activities described in the proposed action (Alternative B of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2013-0025-EA) do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)), as described below:

Beneficial effects:

1. Safely addresses an unauthorized use.
2. Restoration of natural processes associated with the springs.
3. Reduction of human-caused fires and consequent increased likelihood of maintaining adjacent upland vegetation and watershed conditions over the long term.
4. Reduction of public health and safety concerns.

Adverse effects:

1. Loss of a recreational opportunity.
2. Short-term vegetation and wildlife disturbance.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The activities included in the proposed action would not have a significant effect on public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)). The analysis indicated that the proposed actions would improve public health and safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of ecological critical concern. Wetland conditions would improve over the long term.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The activities described in the proposed action would not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)). Controversy in this context means disagreement about the nature of the effects, not expressions of opposition to a proposed action or preference among the alternatives that the EA analyzes (H-1790-1 at 71). I recognize that there is disagreement about recreation site modification decisions which may be controversial; however, based on a review of scientific literature and other information sources, the EA did not identify substantial controversy related to the nature of the effects associated with the proposed actions.

- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.*

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment which are highly uncertain or involve unknown risks as a result of this action (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)). Changing recreational use patterns in response to modified availability are well understood. Vegetation responses when artificial structures and disturbances are well known. The EA (Section 3.0, *Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences*) discloses the expected environmental effects on the human environment; no unique or unknown risks were identified.

- 6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration* (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

The actions analyzed in the EA are a normal practice that has been successfully implemented elsewhere. This EA does not set a precedent for future actions that have significant effects. Addressing unauthorized use is in accordance with decisions and direction established in the 1988 Cascade Resource Management Plan, and the Code of Federal Regulations (EA Sections 1.3 and 1.4).

- 7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The effects of the proposed actions would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)). The EA discloses that no other connected or cumulative actions would cause significant cumulative impacts to recreation, vegetation/watershed, or wildlife/fisheries resources (EA Sections 3.2.3, 3.3.3, and 3.4.3). The proposed action was designed to lessen potential environmental effects relative to natural resources and current uses.

- 8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

I have determined that the activities described in the proposed actions would not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)). Currently undiscovered eligible or listed

properties that might be discovered in the future would be protected from loss or destruction using appropriate management techniques.

- 9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).*

The proposed action would not adversely affect any known threatened, endangered, or BLM special status species or its habitat. As disclosed in the EA (Sections 3.1.1 and 3.4.1), nearby areas provide habitat for several special status species including giant helleborine (BLM Type 3 special status plant), bull trout (threatened under the ESA), redband trout (BLM Type 2), and bald eagle (BLM Type 2). No plants or habitats would be adversely impacted by this project and disturbance to existing vegetation would be kept to a minimum.

- 10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.*

The proposed activities would not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)). The proposed action was developed in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment. The EA disclosed the effect of the proposed action on all critical and non-critical elements and it was determined that the proposed action would not adversely affect any of these elements. Chapter 1 of the EA (Section 1.4, Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Requirements) describes how the proposed actions conform to relevant laws, regulations, policies, and any relevant local permitting requirements.

/s/ *Tate Fischer*

04/24/2015

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Date